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SUBJECT: LATVIA: 2006-2007 INCSR SUBMISSION, PART I - DRUGS

¶1. The following is Embassy Riga's submittal for the 2006-2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Part I, Drugs and Chemical Control:

¶2. I. Summary. Drug use in Latvia is characterized by continued prevalence of synthetics. Ecstasy is the most common narcotic in Latvia, though amphetamines, cannabis, heroin, cocaine and LSD can also be found. Recreational drug use has shifted to ecstasy due to the latter's low cost, as well as national information campaigns highlighting the dangers of intravenous drug use. Heroin use, which had once been Latvia's most serious narcotics problem, is showing signs of renewed popularity. Latvia is party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

¶3. II. Status of Country. Latvia itself is not a significant producer of precursor chemicals, but Customs officials believe that a significant quantity of diverted "pre-precursors" originate in Belarus and transit Latvia en route to other countries. Heroin is sold at "retail" in public places such as parks, in the city center, or more discreetly, in private apartments; selling tactics and methods constantly change. Amphetamines are distributed in venues that attract youth, such as nightclubs, discotheques, gambling centers and raves. Organized crime groups also engage in both wholesale and retail trade in narcotics. Recreational drug use has increased with Latvia's growing affluence, with usage of amphetamines, cannabis, heroin, cocaine, and ecstasy all increasing.

¶4. III. Country Actions Against Drugs in 2006. Policy Initiatives. Latvia is in the second year of its State Program for the Restriction and Control of Addiction and the Spread of Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances (SPRCASNPS) which was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers for the years 2005 to 2008. This national strategy lists as its priorities: reducing the spread of drug abuse, especially among young people; increasing the possibilities for rehabilitation and re-socializing for drug addicts; reducing crime related to drug abuse and distribution, as well as drug trafficking; eliminating and preventing the harm caused to the general development of the Latvian state by drug addiction and drug related crime. Latvia's passage of the SPRCASNPS addressed criticism that it lacked a clear division of authority between municipalities and the state regarding budget and competencies.

¶5. Law Enforcement Efforts. In the first nine months of 2006 the amount of seized heroin, amphetamine, methamphetamine, and cocaine increased compared to 2005 figures. Poppy straw, marijuana, hashish, ephedrine, ecstasy and LSD seizures dropped in the first nine months.

¶6. Amphetamine seizures, which jumped from 2.7 kg in 2005 to 10.1 kg in the first nine months of 2006, were accomplished chiefly by four large seizures: 1.97 kg on February 7, 1.98 kg on May 24, 0.97 kg on June 1, and 3.28 kg on June 27. All four seizures occurred in Riga. Heroin seizures increased from 28.64 grams in 2005 to 125.82 grams in 2006. Methamphetamine seizures also increased by more than three times, from 1.83 kilograms in 2005 to 5.96 kg in 2006.

¶7. Ecstasy seizures dropped from 20,945 tablets in 2005 to 2,299 tablets in 2006. Marijuana seizures dropped to 3.8 kg in 2006, down from 25.3 kg in the previous year. Ephedrine seizures dropped from 18.46 grams in 2005 to 0.88 grams in 2006. Hashish seized dropped

to 242 grams in 2006, from 1,331 grams the year before.

¶8. The Latvian government acknowledges that Latvian law enforcement needs to show better results for its counter-narcotics efforts, despite resource and funding difficulties. The 2005-2008 national strategy takes this into account and indicates the government's intent to increase funding, personnel, and education for law enforcement.

¶9. Corruption. Latvia's Anti Corruption Bureau (KNAB) was established in 2003 to help combat and prevent public corruption and has grown in its effectiveness and scope. According to the KNAB Director, his bureau has not found any senior-level Latvian officials to be involved in, encouraging, or facilitating narcotic crimes or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions.

The USG also has no evidence of drug-related corruption at senior levels of the Latvian government. As a matter of government policy, Latvia does not encourage or facilitate the illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions.

¶10. Agreements and Treaties. Latvia is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1961 UN Single Convention as amended by its 1972 Protocol. A 1923 extradition and a 1934 supplementary extradition treaty currently are in force between the U.S. and Latvia. On December 7, 2005, Latvia and the United States signed a new extradition treaty and Mutual Legal Assistance protocol, which awaits ratification. Latvia is a party to the UN Convention against Corruption, and to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols against trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling and illegal manufacturing and trafficking in firearms.

¶11. Drug Flow/Transit. Narcotic substances are frequently smuggled into Latvia from Lithuania, principally by ground transport. Seaports are used mainly to transship drugs destined for sale elsewhere. Latvia is not a primary transit route for drugs destined for the United States. Most drugs transiting Latvia are destined for the Nordic countries or Western Europe. Heroin is primarily trafficked via Russia from Central Asia.

¶12. Domestic Programs/Demand Reduction. The current national strategy addresses demand reduction, education, and drug treatment programs. Since its passage by the Cabinet of Ministers, the following items have been achieved: establishment of a co-ordination mechanism for institutions involved in combating drug addiction (involving eight ministries); monitoring of the work program of the EMBDDA on the national level; establishment of a system for monitoring court directed treatment for addicted offenders; holding educational events for teachers and parents, as well as updated educational materials and informative booklets; inclusion of information on drug addiction in school curriculums; establishment of a pilot program for teaching prevention of drug addiction, alcohol abuse and smoking; pilot programs on drug addiction for local governments; education programs for members of the armed forces; mechanisms for information exchange amongst relevant institutions; and an increase in the number of employees in the regional offices of the Organized Crime Enforcement Department under the State Police.

¶13. In addition to the State Narcotics Center, Latvia has established four regional narcotics addiction treatment centers in Jelgava, Daugavpils, Liepaja, and Straupe. There are rehabilitation centers in Riga and Rindzele, and youth rehabilitation centers in Jaunpiebalga and Straupe. Data from 2005 showed that Latvia had 27,648 patients in alcoholic addiction programs and 2,441 patients being treated for narcotic or psychotropic drug addiction.

¶14. IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs. Bilateral Cooperation. The United States maintains assistance on liaison programs in Latvia that focus on investigating and prosecuting drug offenses, corruption, and organized crime.

¶15. The Road Ahead. The United States will continue to pursue and deepen cooperation with Latvia, especially in the areas of law enforcement and prosecution. The United States will expand efforts to coordinate with the EU and other donors to ensure complementary and cooperative assistance and policies with the government of Latvia. The United States will also encourage Latvia to work with regional partners to advance the mutual fight against narcotics trafficking.